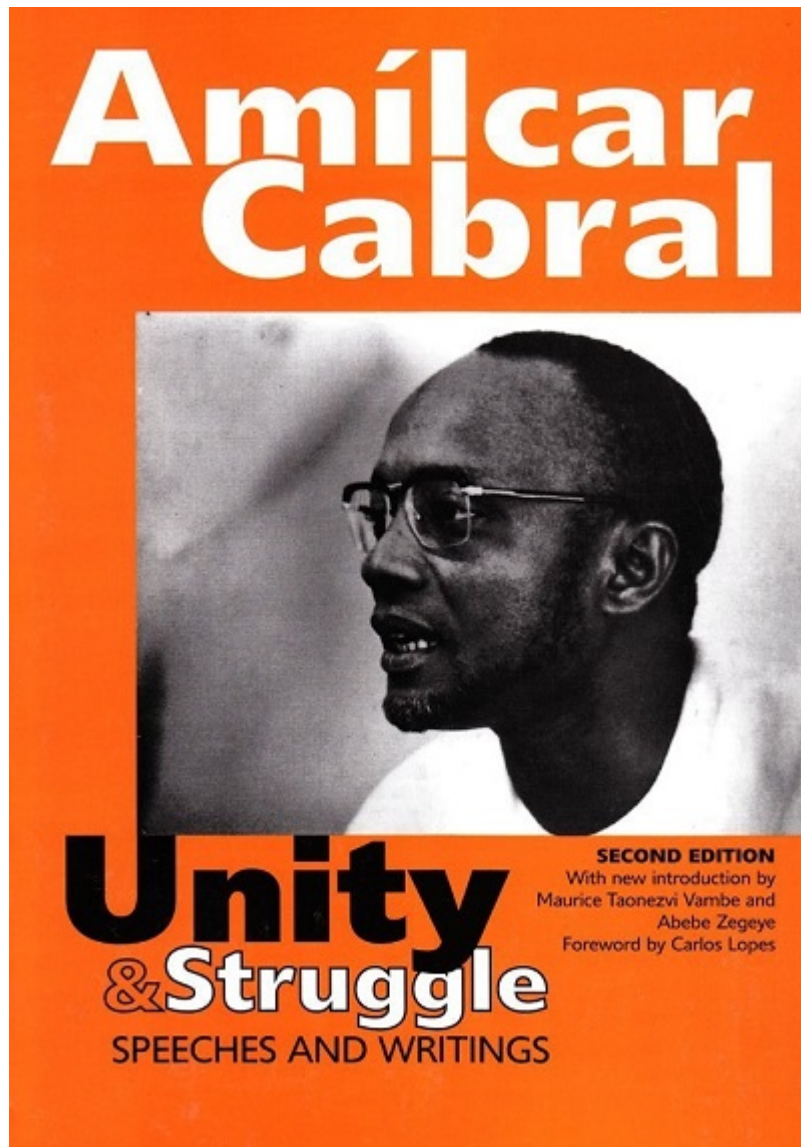


Apply Party Principles in Practice

Date unknown



Writings of [Amilcar Cabral](#), 1924-1973

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[Date unknown]

In the current phase of our struggle and in order to strengthen our organisation in the face of the great responsibilities it has, it is not enough to put into operation all the leadership bodies of the party, it is not enough to do good political work and to operate effectively and victoriously on the military level. In order that the party should be constantly better and rise to the level of its responsibilities, it is essential to apply at all echelons of our life and our struggle the principles of organisation and work which the party adopted as basic norms for its action. A case in point is the of *criticism* and *self-criticism* to solve internal questions and contradictions, the principle of *collective leadership* in *leadership* of party life, the principle of *democratic centralism* and *revolutionary democracy* in the decisions to be taken at all levels and in the practice of party watchwords.

1. Develop the spirit of *criticism* between militants and responsible workers. Give everyone at every level the opportunity to criticise, to give his opinions about the work and the behaviour or the action of others. Accept criticism, wherever it comes from, as a contribution to improving the work of the party, as a demonstration of active interest in the internal life of our organisation.

Always remember that criticism is not to *speak ill* nor engage in intrigues. Criticism is and should be the act of expression an open, candid opinion in front of those concerned, on the basis of facts and in the spirit of fairness, to assess the thought and action of others, with the aim of improving that thought and action. Criticism is to be constructive, to show proof of sincere interest in the work of others, for the improvement of that work.

Combat severely the *evil tongue*, the obsession with intrigues, the 'so-and-so says', unfair and unfounded criticism. To assess the thought and action of a comrade is not necessarily to speak ill of it. To speak highly, to praise, to encourage, to stimulate – this is also criticism. While we must always be watchful against conceit and personal pride, we must not stint praise to someone who deserves it. Praise with cheerfulness, with frankness, in front of others, all those whose thought and action properly serve the progress of the party. We must likewise apply fair

criticism, denounce frankly, censure, condemn and demand the condemnation of all those who practise acts against the progress and interests of the party, fight face to face errors and faults, help others to improve their work. Derive a lesson from every mistake we make or which others make, in order to avoid making new mistakes, so that we do not fall into the follies into which others have already fallen. Criticising a comrade does not mean putting oneself against the comrade, making a *sacrifice* in which the comrade is the victim: it is to show him that we are all interested in his work, that we are all one and the same body, that his errors harm us all, and that we are watchful, as friends and comrades, to help him overcome his weaknesses and contribute increasingly in order that the party should be increasingly better.

Develop the principle of criticism at all party meetings, in all committees and within the armed forces. In the guerrilla force or in the army, after every operation against the enemy, we must assess the results of that action and the behaviour of every combatant. Derive all the lessons from the action in order to make new and better actions. In education, in production, in commercial activity, in care – in all branches of our life and struggle – we must be capable of criticising and accepting criticism.

But criticism (proof of the willingness of others to help us or of our willingness to help others) must be complemented by self-criticism (proof of our own willingness to help ourselves to improve our thoughts and our action).

Develop in all the militants, responsible workers and combatants the spirit of self-criticism: The ability of each person to make a specific analysis of his own work, to distinguish in it what is bad, to acknowledge his own errors and to discover the causes and the effects of these errors. To make self-criticism is not merely to say 'Yes, I recognise my fault, my error and I ask forgiveness', while remaining ready to commit new faults, new errors. It is not pretending to be repentant of the evil one has done, while remaining convinced deep down that it is the other who do not understand. Still less is making self-criticism to make a *ceremony* so as to go on later with a clear conscience and carry on committing errors. To criticise oneself is not to pay a *response* or an *indulgence* not to offer *penance*. Self-criticism is an act of frankness, courage, comradeship and awareness of our responsibilities, a proof of our will to accomplish properly, a demonstration of our determination to improve constantly and to make a better contribution to the progress of our party. Honest self-criticism does not necessarily demand absolution: it is a pledge that we make with our conscience not to commit further errors; it is to accept our responsibilities before others and to mobilise all our capabilities to do more and better. To criticise oneself is to recognise oneself within oneself in order to serve better.

2. *Apply progressively at all levels of the party leadership the principle of collective leadership.* Do everything possible in order that the leading bodies of the party may operate genuinely, not on the basis of one, two or three persons, but all of their members, men and women.

Collective leadership means leadership, and order or command made by a group of persons and not by one person alone or some persons in the group. To lead collectively, in a group, is to study questions jointly, to find their best solution, and to take decisions jointly, it is to benefit from experience and intelligence of each and all so as to lead, order and command better. In collective leadership, each person in the leadership must have his own clearly defined duties and is responsible for the carrying out of decisions taken by the group in regard to his duties. To lead collectively is to give to each leader the opportunity of thinking and acting, to demand that he takes the responsibilities within his competence, that he has initiative, that he demonstrates his creative capacity with determination and freedom, and that he correctly serves the teamwork, which is the product of the efforts and the contributions made by all. To lead collectively is to co-ordinate the thought and action of those who form the group, to derive the greatest return in the accomplishment of the groups tasks, within the limits of their competence and in the framework of the activities of the organisation. But to lead collectively is not and cannot be, as some suppose, to give to all and everyone the right of uncontrolled views and initiatives, to create anarchy (lack of government), disorder, contradiction between leaders, empty arguments, a passion for meetings without results. Still less is it to give vent to incompetence, ignorance, intellectual foolhardiness, only so as to pretend that everyone gives orders. Although it is true that two heads are better than one, we must be able to distinguish between the heads, and each head must know exactly what is has to do. In the framework of the collective leadership, we must respect the opinion of more experienced comrades who for their part must help the others with less experience to learn and to improve their work. In the framework of the collective leadership there is always one or other comrade who has a higher standing as party leader and who for this reason has more individual responsibility, even if the responsibility for the group's tasks falls on all the members of the group. We must allow prestige to these comrades, help them to have constantly higher standing, but not allow them to monopolise (take over) the work and responsibility of the group. We must, on the other hand, struggle against the spirit of slackness, and disinterest, the fear of responsibilities, the tendency to agree with everything, to obey blindly without thinking.

Combat the spirit of the '*big man*', the traditional chief, *boss* or *foreman* among responsible workers. But combat also the spirit of the *vassal*, *subject* in the chief's service, the *blue-eyed worker*, the *servant* or the houseboy between responsible

workers and militants. In the framework of collective leadership, the higher bodies must demand from the more elevated that they provide specific tasks to accomplish, clear watchwords and take decisions on questions within their competence.

Combat the spirit of the group and of sects, closed circles, and obsession with secrecy among some persons, personal questions and the ambition to give orders.

Collective leadership must strengthen the leadership capability of the party and create specific circumstances to make full use of members of the party.

3. *Develop, respect and ensure respects for the correct application of democratic centralism in the practice of decisions and the carrying out of party watchwords.* Specifically limit the duties of each leadership body and the bodies at the base, thoroughly study each question or each new initiative, take objective decisions and give clear watchwords for every task and the practical achievement of party watchwords.

Democratic centralism means that the power to make decisions, to formulate watchwords, to define tasks – to lead – is concentrated in central bodies or entities, with clearly defined duties, but that these decisions, watchwords etc., must be arrived at democratically, on the basis of interests and opinion of representatives of the masses, on the basis of respect for the opinion and interests of the majority. It means that each decision concerning a new question must be taken after a full and free discussion within the bodies affected by it or from the base to the top, if the matter is one which affects the whole life of the party. After this discussion and in accordance with what emerges from it, the central bodies take a decision which must immediately be carried out at all levels concerned, and without further discussion.

Centralism because the power, the capability to decide and to lead, is concentrated in special bodies and no other body or individual can exercise this power. Democratic because the exercise of power by these bodies does not depend merely on the will of those who give the orders, but is based on the interests and on the opinions expressed by the majority. In order constantly to improve the practice of democratic centralism we must pay attention to the aspirations and opinions of the mass of the people with regard to every important question of our life and our struggle. We must bring into operation all the bodies at the base of the party and allow constant prestige to the responsible workers and leaders who fulfil their duty. Democratic centralism is a school of discipline, of respect for the views of others, of democracy and the ability to put into practice the decisions taken.

4. Practise revolutionary democracy in all aspects of party life. Every responsible worker must bravely assume his responsibilities, must demand from others respect for his activity and must respect the activity of others. Do not hide anything from the mass of the people, do not lie, fight against lies, do not disguise the difficulties, errors and failures, do not believe in easy victories, nor in appearances.

Revolutionary democracy demands that we should combat opportunism, tolerance towards errors, unfounded excuses, friendships and comradeships on the basis of interests opposed to those on the party and the people, the obsession that one or other responsible worker is irreplaceable in his post, Practise and defend the truth and always the truth in front of militants, responsible workers, the people whatever the difficulties knowledge of the truth might cause. Revolutionary democracy demands that the militant should not be afraid of the responsible worker, that the responsible worker should have no dread of the militant, nor fear the mass of the people. It demands that the responsible worker live in the middle of the people, in front of the people and behind the people, that he work for the party serving the people.

In the framework of revolutionary democracy, power comes from the people, from the majority, and no one should be afraid of losing power. The leader must be the faithful interpreter of the will and the aspirations of the revolutionary majority and not the lord of power, the absolute master who uses the party and does not serve the party. In the framework of revolutionary democracy, we must avoid demagoguery, promises we cannot keep, exploitation of the people's feelings and the ambitions of opportunists. We must act in accordance with realities, to give everyone the possibility to progress, to verify through his own action and that of others that the party is the achievement of us all and that we all belong to the party, which is the instrument our people created for the winning of our freedom and for the construction of their progress. In the framework of revolutionary democracy and in the specific circumstances of our struggle, we must constantly increase the strength of the people, advance bravely for the conquest of power by the people, for the radical transformation (at the base) of the life of our people, for a stage in which the weapons and means of defence of our revolution will be entirely in the hands of the people. Do not be afraid of the people and persuade the people to take part in all the decisions which concern them – this is the basic condition of revolutionary democracy, which little by little we must achieve in accordance with the development of our struggle and our life.

Revolutionary democracy demands that there should be at the head of our party and our people the best descendants of our land. Step by step we have to purge the

unworthy elements from our party, the opportunists, the demagogues (deceivers of the people), the dishonest, those who fail in their duty. So as to clear the way increasingly for those who understand and live in its entirety the life of our party, to those who really want to serve the party and the people, to those who carry out and increasingly want to carry out and better their duties as militants, responsible workers and revolutionaries. The correct application of the principles of criticism and self-criticism, of collective leadership, of democratic centralism and of revolutionary democracy is the most effective way for us to gain one to the most important victories, if not the most important, of our life and of our struggle, namely: *to act so that our Party belongs more and more to those who are able to make it constantly better; to make of our Party an effective instrument for the construction of freedom, peace, progress and happiness for our people in Guinea and Cape Verde.*

Course: Induction

24000, Amilcar Cabral, 1924-1973, Apply Party Principles in Practice

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